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AUTHOR Worrest, Henry N.
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ABSTRACT

The curriculum development project at Pretty Eagle School (a private school on the Crow Indian Reservation in southeastern Montana serving 100 students, prekindergarten through grade 8) was started in the fall 1980 with funding acquired from federal and private sources. A comprehensive program of curriculum development and staff development was implemented through a contract with Montana State University for graduate level courses dealing with planned change; methodology of curriculum development, i.e., curriculum mapping, scope and sequence, objectives writing, etc., and courses for teachers of Indian children. The second year of the project (1981-82) involved the hiring of a small group of specialists to assist in areas such as testing, science, mathematics, and language arts. By the end of the year, teachers had developed a rough draft of their curriculum document. During the summer 1982, the rough draft was edited and re-edited to provide a draft in a format usable by the teachers. A director, hired for the current school year (1982-83), will be responsible for finalizing the curriculum document. (AH)

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT PRETTY EAGLE SCHOOL: SOME SUCCESS AND SOME PROBLEMS

By

Henry N. Worrest
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT

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The Pretty Eagle School is a private school situated on the Crow Indian Reservation which is located in southeastern Montana. The school serves approximately 100 students, most of whom are Indians, in grades prekindergarten through eight. During the period of this curriculum development process, the professional staff of the school consisted of one administrator, eight teachers and one librarian.

In the fall of 1980, a new administrator--just out of graduate study--was hired for the Pretty Eagle School. The administrator, Robert McLean, knew that the school had some problems. In his contract talks with the Pretty Eagle school board, he negotiated an agreement that established performance objectives for himself and agreement that in the future the board would support his efforts to hold teachers accountable through the establishment of a procedure to develop some control of teachers' performance. In very short order the new administrator discovered that the curriculum was in disarray. Textbooks, where they were available, were hand-me-downs from other schools, surplus from publishers or a variety of out-of-date left-overs from previous years. Teachers taught what they thought was appropriate for the grade level, usually without consulting other teachers--which probably would not have done much good anyway because of the high rate of teacher turnover.

The administrator was able to acquire some funding from both federal and private resources which enabled him to put together a rather comprehensive program of curriculum development and staff

development. A contract was drawn up between the Pretty Eagle School and Montana State University which initially called for the delivery of some coursework for staff development.

The first step in the implementation of the program was to offer a graduate level course, Planned Change--Organization and Theory. Most of the teachers enrolled in the course which met Friday evening and Saturday morning over a period of about eight weeks. Although the course content was important, an equally pressing concern was to have the faculty talk about change in an effort to unfreeze the organization.

One example of the success of unfreezing was the formation of a faculty council. The administrator was interested in establishing some sort of representative group that could sit down and air the problems and concerns. During a class discussion of conflict resolution, some members of the faculty expressed a concern about presenting their innermost concerns about the operation of the school to the administrator. The suggestion was made that perhaps a representative group that met periodically could be just the answer, for in a representative group a member could bring up a concern while maintaining the anonimity of the complaintant. Within the week steps were taken to organize a faculty council.

During class discussions people who worked together had an opportunity to ask questions, engage in discussions and participate in a variety of group activities. Since all of the class members were from the same school, they had some common knowledge, but it was also

recognized that they had different perceptions about the school. This situation made class sessions much more enjoyable since the course content could focus on problems and concerns that were real and about which all the class members had some information.

One problem faced by the school concerned the fact that the pupils who graduated from the Pretty Eagle school continued their education in as many as four different high schools. The teachers expressed concern of a lack of knowledge of the expectations that were held by the teachers in those four different schools for the pupils that were entering their classes. A variety of strategies were discussed to determine what could be done to ascertain the entering expectations of the four schools. The teachers decided that probably more benefit would come from an analysis of their own curriculum and then develop it to meet their expectations which they determined was to provide the best educational experience for their students that they as a faculty could provide.

This decision of the teachers and their commitment to enter into another activity was exactly in line with what was desired. The first course had unfrozen the organization and led to a commitment to pursue curriculum development activities. It established teacher ownership of an effort to improve the instructional program of the Pretty Eagle School.

The second activity in the Pretty Eagle School curriculum development process was to negotiate for another course. The purpose of this course was to deal with the methodology or curriculum development which

included such activities as curriculum mapping, scope and sequence, discussion about student needs and mastery learning, objectives writing, etc.

To start the group off, a curriculum mapping activity was carried out. The teachers identified major topics within a subject area and, using a flowing out process, divided the major topics into subtopics.

Using language arts as an illustrative example, the teachers looked for gaps and overlaps. While doing this, a discussion was held on the concepts of introducing, maintaining, developing and mastering subject matter. From the mapping of "what is" in the curriculum, the teachers then made some decisions about what the curriculum should be and, using a form developed for the PRIMES (an acronym for Pennsylvania Retrieval of Information for Mathematics Education Systems) project, the teachers listed the complete set of subject topics in the space provided on the left side of the form. They then identified grade level responsibilities for the topic area--introduce, develop, maintain and master. Teachers used these concepts and practiced their application to other subject areas.

After looking at the developmental process, the teachers next took up the topic of performance objectives and started writing simple objectives for some of the material previously developed, practicing in a subject area of their own choice.

The curriculum study activities continued until the close of school in May.

During the summer months the faculty was encouraged to participate in a variety of education activities--regular and special on-campus courses or special off-campus courses which were presented in Hardin, Montana for the benefit of school personnel teaching Indian children. To assist the teachers' participation, stipends were provided. Six of the eight teachers actually did attend some program during the summer months.

During the summer, funding was obtained and a new contract was negotiated for the 1981-82 school year.

When the teachers met in the fall, they were informed that the curriculum development project would continue. It was suggested to the teachers that as they did their unit and daily plans, by giving just a little extra effort they could develop a nice set of performance objectives that could then be applied to a curriculum guide.

During the second year of the project, a small group of specialists was provided to assist the Pretty Eagle teachers in specific areas. One specialist was in the area of testing. It was the responsibility of the testing specialist to assist the teachers in writing test items for both formative and summative evaluations. Other specialists were provided in science, mathematics and language arts. The subject area specialists assisted the teachers in developing instructional topics for each grade level, performance objectives for each topic and evaluation procedures.

The logistics for supplying the specialists consisted of flying the testing specialist to the site for several meetings with the entire

faculty and of driving all of the subject specialists to the site for meetings with small sub-groups of the faculty. In all cases, the meetings took place on school time consisting of the teachers' entire work day after the lunch period. During the work period with the subject specialists many questions were answered, several philosophical problems were considered and much progress was made in the development of the final product.

By the end of the school year, the teachers produced the rough draft of their curriculum document.

During the summer of 1982, the rough draft was edited and, using word processing equipment, a clean draft was provided. After some additional minor editing, another draft was prepared; however, this draft was provided in a format that could be used by the teachers. One problem with the "final" draft, the one currently under revision, is its size. Therefore, the project for the current year is to trim the curriculum guide down to usable size and to put it into a usable format.

The Pretty Eagle School, for the current school year, has hired a curriculum director, and the responsibility for revising the curriculum guide falls on her shoulders. Also, consistent with the recent history of the Pretty Eagle School, there is a new principal. Once again, the faculty must adjust to new leadership; and the question to be answered is, "Will the process of curriculum development be continued or will the time and effort expended by the faculty over the past two years have been spent in vain?"